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# SCULPTURE;

A

# POEM:

BY

EDWARD LYTTON BULWER;

Author of Pelham, Devereux, Disowned, &c.

WITH A PORTRAIT.

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# SCULPTURE.

Marmoris aut eboris fabros aut æris amavi.—Hor. Ep. lib. 2. i. 9

THE winds were hush'd on Pindus—and the day
Balm'd by a thousand sweets, had died away—
The wave beneath, the laurel on the hill
Bask'd in the heaven's blue beauty—and were still:—
Pomp—Silence—Night were reigning on the earth,
Nymph, whom my rude verse worships, at thy birth!
The Muses rear'd thee in their starry caves,—
Laved thy fair limbs beneath their holiest waves,—
And taught the wild soul speaking from thine eye
To quaff the light of Genius from the sky.
There, by lone mount, and vale, and deep-brow'd dell,
There, by the bee-loved flowers, and mossy cell,—
There, by the gleries of the summer noon,
And the sweet sadness of the midnight moon—
Thy spirit stored within its still recess
The myriad forms of Nature's loveliness;—
The grand—the soft—the lofty and the fair
Wooed thy warm thoughts—and made their dwelling there.
'Tis said—what minstrel doubts the legend's truth?—
The day-god loved thee from thine earliest youth,
And pour'd around the musings of thy heart
The shadowy splendours of his holiest art—
To substance fix'd the bright thoughts all his own,
And breathed the life of Poesy to stone.

Inspiring visions rose at midnight's hour,
Wild shapes of Beauty throng'd thy haunted bower.
Till o'er thy mind creative Genius grew—
And the hand sculptured what the fancy drew.
Nymph of old Castaly! thou lovest to keep
Thy moon-lit vigils where the mighty sleep;
O'er the dim tomb to hold thy silent sway,
And rear thy marble triumphs o'er decay.
'Tis thine to fix through ages fresh and warm,
The frail perfection of the fading form;—
And though no more by cool Cephisus' stream
The Queen of Beauty haunts the minstrel's dream—
Though now no more on Tempe's classic vale
Apollo's locks win worship from the gale,
Yet still thy spells preserve them to the eye,—
Chain to the earth the bright forms of the sky,—
And raise high spirits from the mine and ore,
That crowds may gaze,—and Genius may adore!
To thee, where old Ilyssus roves along
The olive banks, all eloquent with song,
The bright Athenian bent his thoughtful brow,
Breathed his young thoughts, and pour'd his lonely vow.
And the far Isle of Roses* o'er the sea
Rear'd her world's wonder as a shrine for thee:—
Where is that vast Colossus, which bestrode
The free waves like Ambition?—while they flow'd
Hushing their wrath like slaves—as through you arch
Fraught with earth's wealth, the proud barks went their march?
Where is that brazen pomp was wont to throw
Back on the Sun the glory of his glow—
And seem'd the Genius of that daring clime,
Dazzling all eyes, and form'd for every time—

* Rhodes.

Earth at its feet, and Heaven upon its brow—
Symbol of Greece,—and art thou nothing now!
Enough!—on forms unwreck'd beneath the blast
Or blight of ages, be our wonder cast—
Is it a Goddess? lo! I bend the knee,
Dream of heaven's beauty! let me worship thee!
Thou art indeed too lovely for the earth
As earth is now—thy charms are of the birth
Of her first morn—when every flower was trod
And every fount was hallow'd by its god—
And brighter beings wander'd from above
To win the treasure of a mortal's love.
Oh! o'er the sculptor's spirit pour'd each ray
Which memory hoarded of that golden day,—
Each thought of grace, or goddess lingering still
By silver stream, or Oread-haunted hill,
All which the soul deems bright, or passion dear—
When his wild fancy turn'd—and fix'd them *here!*
Oft at deep noon—what time the wearied gale
Slept on the violets—while the shadowy vale,
The fairy music of the wood-bird's lay,
The glad bee murmuring on his perfumed way,
The green leaves laughing in the quivering beams,
Lull'd the luxurious spirit in wild dreams,
Oft hath the marvel of thy beauty stole
Sweet shape, along the visions of my soul!
E'en as when young Adonis wooed thy vow,—
E'en as thou glowest from the marble now,—
E'en as thou stood'st 'mid vanquish'd gods above,
In breathing, palpable, embodied love.
Terrible!—mark, and tremble!—fold by fold
See round the writhing sire[1] the enormous serpent's roll'd:

[1] Laocoon.

Mark the stern pang—the clench'd despairing clasp—
The wild limbs struggling with that fatal grasp—
The deep convulsion of the labouring breath—
Th' intense and gathering agony of death.—
Yet 'mid the mortal's sufferings still is view'd
The haughty spirit shaken—not subdued,
Though nature faint, though every fibre burst,
Scathed—stifled—crush'd—let vengeance wreak its worst:
Fate—terror—hell—let loose your powers of ill,
Wring the wrack'd form—the soul can scorn you still.
  Nymph of my song! I turn my glance, and lo!
The Archer-god speeds vengeance from his bow.—
Not, as when oft, amid his Delian glade,
The Lord of Beauty knelt to mortal maid;
Not, as when winds were hush'd—and waves lay mute
Listing, and lull'd beneath, his silver lute;—
But like the terrors of an angry sky,
Clouds on his brow, and lightning in his eye.
The foot advanced—the haughty lips apart—
The voice just issuing from the swelling heart—
The breathing scorn—Yet 'mid that scorn appear
No earthlier passions mix'd with human fear;
The god speaks from the marble not the less
Than when heaven brightens with his loveliness.
And o'er each limb th' enamour'd Graces play,
Leave wrath its *pride*, but steal its *gloom* away.
Yes, at those feet, the bard of Isis sung,*
Oft in deep love the maiden's form was flung,
And her soul fed on passion, till her thought
Madden'd beneath the anguish it had sought,
And health with hope departed—and the flush
Of fever deepen'd o'er youth's purer blush—

* Alluding to the story of the "Maid of France," which has been so beautifully applied by Mr. Millman.

Grief's canker prey'd upon her withering bloom
And love's wild vision woke but in the tomb.
E'en thus of old the Cyprian sculptor* view'd
The star-like form which bless'd his solitude—
From earth, and earthly beauty he had flown,
And graved a dream of loveliness on stone:—
And made a temple of his beating heart,
To worship the perfection of his art.—
And aye he knelt adoring—none were near
Th' empassion'd homage of his vows to hear.
The unpeopled forest, and the murmuring wave—
The shadowy twilight of his lonely cave,—
The mystic language of the rushing wind—
Nursed the voluptuous madness of his mind.
He rain'd warm kisses on th' unconscious face.—
Wooed the mute marble to his wild embrace,—
Gazed till the cell swam round his reeling eyes.—
And the chill air was burning with his sighs.—
Hung on that lip, alas! so vainly fair—
And breathed at last his very being there.
O'er the cold cheek rose Passion's blushing hue—
Slowly to life the kindling statue grew,
Caught the warm spirit from his soul's excess.
And breathed and moved in living loveliness.
Years have roll'd on, alas! no longer now
Round Hella's sword blooms Freedom's myrtle bough
There, 'mid the gorgeous piles which still proclaim
Unchanged—the changes of her fallen fame,
Smit by the bolt, and bow'd beneath the blast
Of fate,—she sits—the spectre of the past.—
Yet still the warm Italian loves her lore,
Gleans the rich harvest from each haunted shore

O'er his rude harp the Roman minstrel flings
Flowers from her wreath, and music from her strings:
And from his native banks to Tiber's tide
Th' Athenian sculptor wafts the Parian pride—
Glows the live statue, and the polish'd dome,
And Greece hath found a second birth in Rome.
Still the young Faun amid the wild flowers sleeps—
Still his carousal hoar Silenus keeps—
And still Diana's beauty glows as dear,
As when Endymion lured her from her sphere.
Still unsubdued amid the wrecks of years
Her lofty spear Athenian Pallas rears,—
And still—though thunder waits not on his nod,
Throned in his grandeur sits the imperial God.
Still in mad mirth the Bacchanalian throng
Weave the wild dance, and raise the frantic song—
And calm in stern repose—(his labours done)
Stands, like a sleeping storm, Alcmæna's son.
  Behold, where in his nerved and naked might
Rushes the Circus Champion to the fight—
Stretches the gaunt arm in its sweeping length—
Starts from each limb the eloquence of strength—
On the bent brow Pride, Power, and Conquest reign.
From the curved lip the spirit breathes disdain—
And all the savage in his sternest mood
Speaks from the form unawed and unsubdued!—
Where mid yon puny race of courts can be,
Son of the woods! the champion meet for thee!
The strife is o'er—e'en as a broken bow
Nerveless and spent—the Terrible lies low!—
He leans upon his hand—the lion crest
Bows to the dust—and from the untamed breast
Falls drop by drop life's tide—the eye is dim,
And o'er the buckler droops the giant limb—

And death is on the Mighty!—Aye, thou proud
And guilty city! let thy ruthless crowd
Pour o'er their prey the mockery of their mirth.
Blood with those echoes calls forth from the earth—
And Heaven full soon shall answer.—Hurrying forth
Sweeps on dark wings the whirlwind of the North—
Hush—it hath past!—By Tiber's glassy wave
Crouches—where Brutus trod—yon supple slave!
Where the voluptuous Cæsars held their sway,
Couch'd with the Vandal, saddens stern Decay.
Where in those halls, Harmonia waked her strings,
Hark, the harsh shout of Gothic revel rings,
And o'er the pillar'd pomp and trophied arch
Gaunt Havoc speeds her desolating march.
But from the midnight of Time's dullest dream
Be our's to wake, and hail the earliest beam.—
Ages have past—a star is in the skies—
The clouds are rent—and light and Leo rise.—
See, from each crumbling stone and mouldering bust
Admiring Genius clears th' unhallow'd dust!—
The buried pomp of years awakes once more—
The solemn Earth gives up her silent store—
And the world's second morning p[illegible]s its rays
Bright as of old, on Michael's eagle gaze!—
Approach and reverence, stranger! calm and lone
The Prophet Chief* claims homage from his throne.
From that broad brow, closed lip, and marble cheek,
And high repose, no human passions speak—
But power and majesty, august and proud,
Brood o'er the awful image,—like a cloud!
And in the lines of that unearthly face
The eye of Fancy in its gaze might trace

[illegible]

Deep visions of the Future—the sublime
And mystic secrets of primeval time—
And the rapt holiness of him who heard
Through flame and darkness God's Eternal Word!
  There the young shepherd* stands, as when he trod
The earth, exulting in the might of God.—
Scorn'd the strong armour, and the giant limb—
And knew the Lord of Hosts was over *him!*
Round his light form no sheltering garments cling,
He wields no weapon but the simple sling;
Yet in the advancing step—the lofty mien—
The calm stern front—the undaunted soul is seen.
Though armies shrink around him;—though the brave
Doom in sad thought his rashness to the grave—
God, who preserved him from the lion,† here
Is not less mighty—wherefore should he fear?
  Alas for nations!—while we gaze, the spark
Of kindling light expires—and we are dark—
E'en while the gladd'ning minstrel turns to bless
This Tadmor smiling through Time's wilderness—
The brief and lonely incense of his breath
But wakes—like Nero's music—amid death.
Again long years!—from Superstition's chain
And the dull torpor of her gloomy reign
Thou wakest Rome!—like Rhesus, but to feel
Deep in thy heart, the foeman's fatal steel!—
Scorning thy pride, and scoffing at thy faith,
Sweeps the fierce Gaul to slaughter and to scathe—
And darkly brooding o'er thy vanquish'd wall,
Thy rebel Eagles triumph in thy fall.

* "David" by Michael Angelo.

† "David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."—1 Sam. xvii. 37

Pass we with one brief curse, from Glory's trod,
The strife, the rout, the conquest and the spoil:
Let thrones arise and crumble at a breath,
And man exult in shackles or in death—
These are no fitting subjects for my lay,—
To colder climes we wing our wandering way—
And turn where glows in yonder gorgeous dome,
The Parian pomp of Hellas, and of Rome.*
Proud plumes are waving in the silent air,
The warriors of the earth are gather'd there—
Fair Britain's sons—the fearless and the free:
Romantic Spain, thy haughty chivalry;—
And that old warlike race, for whom the pride
Of the blue Danube rolls its lordly tide.
Hush'd the vain taunt, and awed the exulting eye,
Silently stalks the vengeful Prussian by—
While in rude contrast to the stately crest,
The dazzling croslet, and the glittering vest,
With rugged garb, and wondering looks, pass on
The stern and simple wanderers from the Don.
But oft like clouds amid that gorgeous throng
Dark angry forms sweep loweringly along.
Not theirs the rapt delight—the soul's deep trance—
Grief wrings the heart, and Passion fires the glance.
And ever from the writhing lip, the wrath
Of fierce and struggling spirits flashes forth.
The mutter'd vengeance, and the scornful jest—
The pent volcano of the labouring breast—
The unconquer'd hatred of the powerless will,
That bitter comfort of the conquer'd still!—
But ye, upon whose marble brows serene
Ages of night in clouds and storms have been,

* I need scarcely observe, that I allude to the collection of the Louvre, to which the troops of the allies, when at Paris, resorted in such numbers.

And pass'd like vapours from the morning star.
Hallowing the beauty which they could not mar:—
Ye, mid the littleness of human life,
The fading triumph, and the empty strife,
Calm in your lofty grandeur glance below
Unmoved by passions which ye never know,—
While empires fall around you,—ye retain
Gods of the mind, your everlasting reign!—
And changeless in your power, behold the tide
Of fate, but bear fresh homage to your pride.
Lo! as of old ye stand! the deep blue sky
Of Rome again hangs o'er you, and the eye
Which hails you in your native seats enshrined,
Gleans from all round meet moral for the mind.

Yes, there from every clime shall Genius bring
The vows and incense of her earliest spring;
And to those fanes the pilgrim still shall roam,
And SCULPTURE find her altar and her home,—
Warm'd into life beneath these genial skies,
Round the far Dane,* what fair creations rise!
Here when the moonlight o'er those myrtle groves
Flings its pale beam, the German Wanderer† roves,
And bears rich visions home, to gild the cell
Where, lone and musing, Fancy loves to dwell—
The bright Enthusiast of the Isle shall trace
In colder climes each well-remember'd grace;
Recall and rival all that Greece hath known,
And wake, like *Chantrey*, Eloquence from stone.
And there, fair land! thine own Canova still
Rears o'er thy woes the triumphs of his skill;
Charming the Gods again to haunt the earth,
And waking Beauty to a second birth.

* Thorwaldsen. † Dannecker.

'Though fair the way the pilgrim may have past,
'Turns he not home exultingly at last?
And though in climes to Muse and Memory dear
My soul is lingering—I recall it *here*—
Lo! where through cloister'd aisles, the soften'd day
Throws o'er the form a "dim religious" ray,
In graven pomp and marble majesty
Stands the immortal Wanderer of the Sky—
The sage, who borne on Thought's sublimest car,
Track'd the vague moon, and read the mystic star.—
Sway'd from the planet, or the desert cloud,
To him the Spirits of the Night were bow'd—
Hoar Time reveal'd his marvels—Nature drew
Her secret veil from his undazzled view—
For him, her glowing depths had solemn speech,—
And myriad worlds—life—glory—God in each,
Hymning high joy through Heaven's eternal dome,
Blazed from the darkness round Jehovah's home!
Mark ye—how well the kindling Sculptor took
The sweeping robe—the majesty of look—
And o'er each feature's lofty beauty wrought
The deep intense pervading soul of thought,
And that etherial sunshine which in him
Life could not cloud, and Passion could not dim.
As if the spirit which had wing'd its way
Through Heaven had purged each earthlier sense away.
Oh, may his influence hallow yet the scene
Where once the lustre of his life hath been!—
And—though perchance in vain, Ambition's toil,
Youth's dreaming hope—and Labour's midnight oil
Yet, ere the evil days of strife and sin
Have thrown their shadows o'er the light within,
Learn we from him that truth least understood,—
Man is most great while struggling to be good.

My harp's rude notes are dying—all too long;
My soul hath pour'd its spirit into song,
And yet I pause—What though the weeds I bring
Waft no rich incense from the breathing spring.
I pause—a Northern votary's wreath to twine,
Land of the Roman round thy ruin'd shrine.

Oh, from thy lore if e'er his mind hath caught
For fancy, fire, or energy for thought,
If from the sculptured form, and sacred strain
For him the beauty was not waked in vain,
Then all ungrateful would the Minstrel be
Had not his lyre one parting note for thee!

Oh, as the image in that fabled scene*
In which Leontes mourns his buried Queen.
Came from the dim concealment of long years,
(As rainbows shine through Nature's clouds and tears,)
And bright with smiles descended from above,
Glowing with joy, and redolent of love—
Oh, thus from shrouded pomp, and silence deep,
Where Memory sits to ponder, and to weep—
Italia, wake! the hues of life resume—
And smile away the terrors of the tomb.

* Winter's Tale. Act v. scene 3.

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